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11 August 1971

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Soviet-Indian Treaty: Exercise in
"Friendship Diplomacy"

SUMMARYON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS
APPLY

The Soviet-Indian friendship treaty--a project which was first considered more than two years ago--was concluded at this time in large measure to take care of an immediate Soviet concern--i.e., the forestalling of another Indo-Pakistani war. It was originally conceived of by both sides as an essentially anti-Chinese document. As a result of its signing, Moscow probably believes it has gained much ground against its rivals, China and the US, and taken a long step toward solidifying its position in India and the whole region.

The Indians, like the Soviets, were attracted to the idea of a treaty two years ago because of its anti-Chinese implications. In the present circumstances, they are hoping that the treaty will serve to inhibit Pakistan and limit Chinese intervention. They probably expect that Moscow would immediately suspend all assistance to Islamabad if war broke out with Pakistan, and that it would actually take "effective measures"--not merely consult--if either Pakistan or China attacked India.

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How It All Began

1. The idea of a treaty was first broached by the Soviets over two years ago, in a clearly anti-Chinese context.

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4. More importantly, however, the Soviets had broken their logjam with the Chinese. In September 1969 Kosygin traveled to Peking, and the two sides agreed to work toward normalizing their state-to-state relations and to hold talks about their border problem. A treaty with India at that time would have derailed Moscow's efforts to defuse the crisis with the Chinese.

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5. Talks on the treaty, however, apparently continued well into 1970 and reportedly ceased only when Mrs. Gandhi, preoccupied with domestic issues, decided in mid-1970 that her countrymen were not ready to accept such a departure from India's traditional policy of nonalignment.

The Crisis Revives the Treaty

6. Precisely when discussions resumed is not clear

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on behalf of Pakistan. Moscow nonetheless agreed

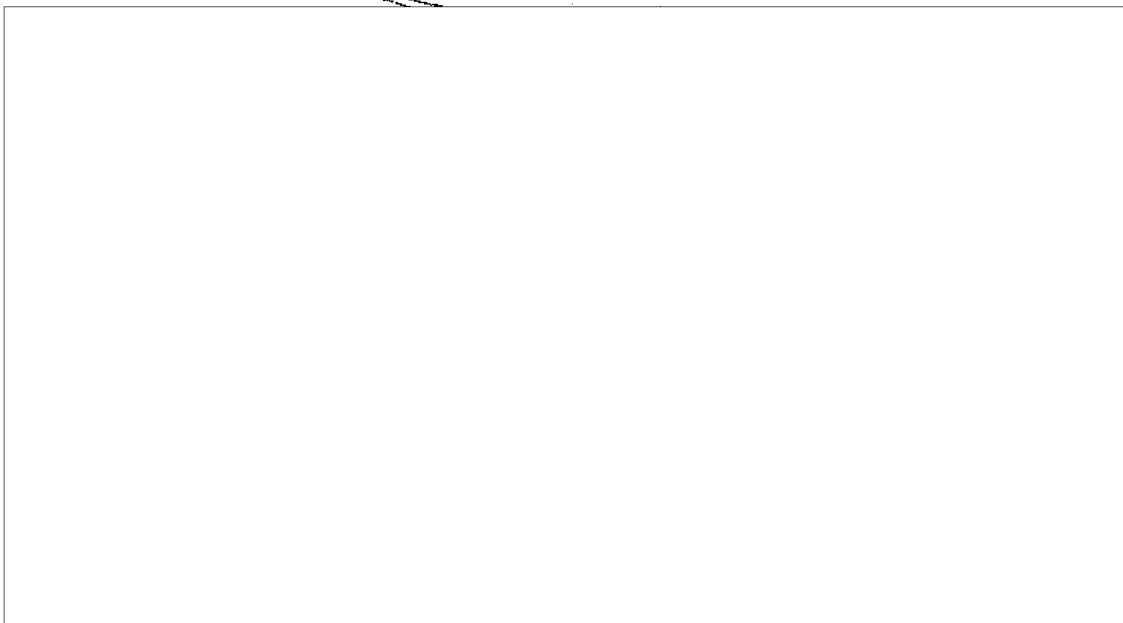
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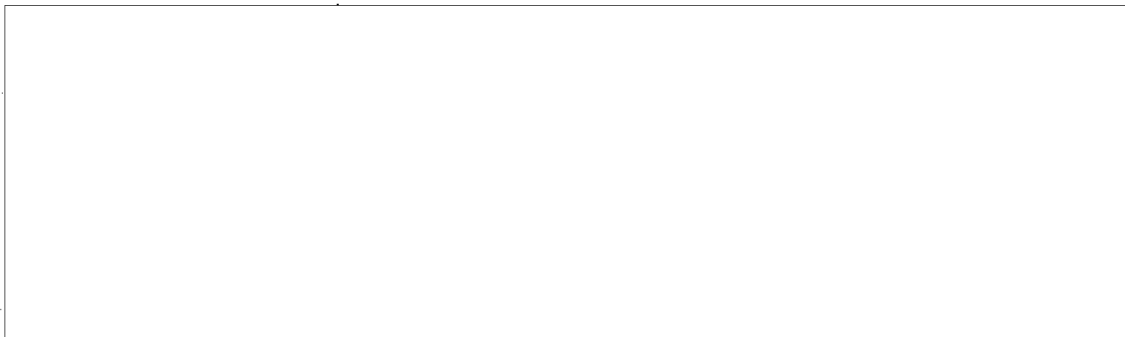


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9. This effect could prove transitory, however, and over the longer run the treaty could even be manipulated by Mrs. Gandhi's opponents in such a way as to defeat the short-term purposes for which it was signed, and make it more difficult for the Soviets both to restrain the Indians and to avoid becoming overinvolved. It would seem that Mrs. Gandhi cannot indefinitely have the best of both worlds. Currently, she is stressing Moscow's new support for India. Her opposition is likely to point precisely to this factor in calling for more forward military action on India's part with regard to the situation in East Pakistan. If this happens, it will be difficult for Mrs. Gandhi to call public attention to the fact that Moscow has made clear its desire that India undertake no precipitate action.

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The View from New Delhi

11. By concluding the friendship treaty the Indians have bought both time and insurance as they confront the problem of war with Pakistan. Mrs. Gandhi had come under mounting pressure to recognize "Bangla Desh," but a hasty recognition might have led to an unwanted or poorly timed war. By concluding the treaty, she has dealt her critics at least a short-term setback. The Indian Government probably feels that the treaty puts the Chinese and the Pakistanis on notice that India does not stand alone. In the Indian view, it even offers, with its references to "third parties," a veiled warning to other powers against interference in Indian policies and actions toward Pakistan.

12. The Indians are specifically hoping that the treaty will serve to limit Chinese intervention should Indo-Pakistani hostilities break out. If the Chinese do intervene, the Indians probably expect that the Soviets would move actively--not merely "consult"--to help protect India's security. The Indians may also hope that the conclusion of the treaty may even instill in the Pakistanis a greater sense of urgency to halt the refugee flow and establish stable conditions in East Bengal. If India later decides upon a military solution, Mrs. Gandhi probably expects that the Soviets would honor that section of the treaty which provides for the withholding of "any assistance to any third party (Pakistan) that engages in armed conflict with the other party."

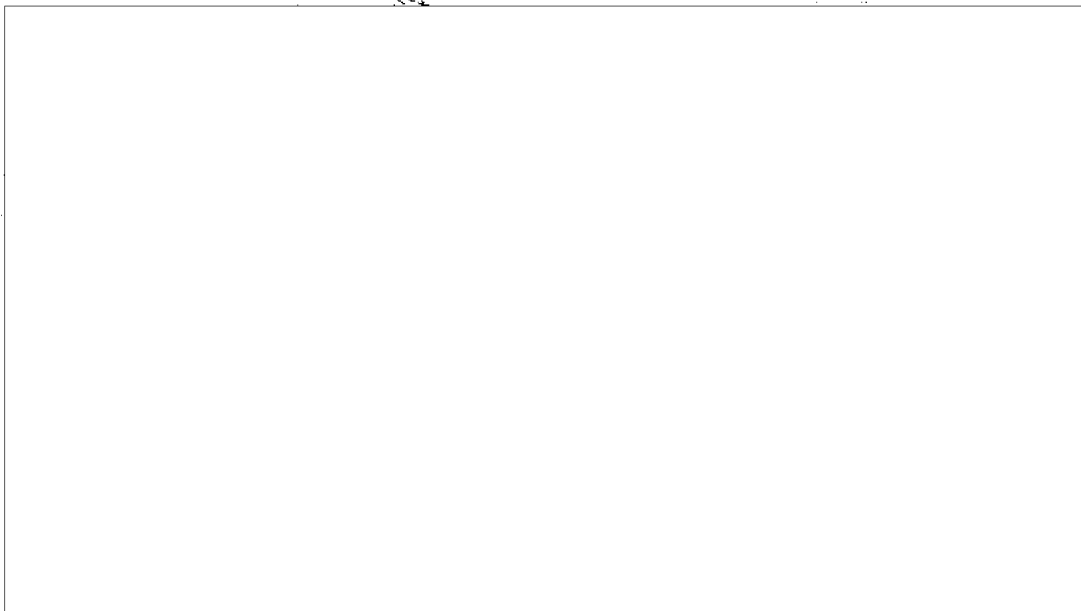
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A Preliminary Assessment

18. Though the treaty was surfaced to take care of an immediate need, the concerns which originally prompted Moscow to seek such a document are still valid. The Sino-Soviet border clashes in 1969 brought home to Moscow the necessity of shoring up its position in Asia, particularly in India. Preparation for the treaty was only one of the steps that Moscow took throughout 1969 and 1970 to improve the Soviet position in the subcontinent. Kosygin's proposal for a regional trade and transit agreement and Brezhnev's call for a "system of collective security in Asia" both proved to be nonstarters and were subsequently shelved until "conditions ripen."

19. Moscow no doubt has been aware that China's smiling diplomacy has been practiced on the Indians, and that the Indians have not reacted negatively to the Chinese approaches. During Pakistani President Yahya's trip to China last fall, Premier Chou En-lai reportedly alerted Yahya to the possible upgrading of Chinese-Indian diplomatic relations. The Soviets may not have known this or of the fact that Chou sent a personal message of congratulations to Mrs. Gandhi on the results of the Indian elections (via the Indian chargé in Peking), but they cannot but have noticed the shift in Chinese propaganda over

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the past year or so. There have been no polemical attacks on Mrs. Gandhi during this period, and propaganda broadcasts supporting the Naga insurgents have virtually ceased. Moreover, the Chinese National Day message to the Pakistanis in March was notable for its absence of any reference to the Kashmiri peoples' "just struggle." The Soviets therefore are probably pleased that the present crisis has afforded them the opportunity to get the Indians nailed down. It is very much in the style of the present Soviet leadership at important junctures to push for a bilateral treaty that can serve as a dramatic political demonstration of the existing character of the USSR's relationship with a given ally or friend.

20. It is probably too soon to gauge the effects the treaty will have on Soviet - West Pakistani relations. (According to press accounts, the initial Pakistani reaction was to invite Gromyko to stop off in Islamabad to explain. Gromyko reportedly declined the invitation, probably because he wished to avoid lessening the favorable impact the treaty is having in India.) The treaty makes clear--if the issue was ever really in doubt--the pre-eminent position India enjoys in the eyes of Soviet policymakers. It does not necessarily mean, however, that the Soviets have completely written off the West Pakistanis. Since Tashkent, the Soviets have been quite adept at developing and maintaining their "special relationship" with India while simultaneously improving their position in Pakistan. Though Moscow's policy since the present crisis began has been publicly pro-Indian, the Soviets have been careful not to completely cut their ties to the Pakistanis. (Just ten days ago Pakistani President Yahya congratulated the US and the USSR for the correctness of their policies during the present crisis.) Although the Soviets, for example, have tried to give the Indians the impression that Moscow is exerting economic pressure on the West Pakistanis, there is no evidence that this is so. In fact, work proceeds apace on the \$200-million steel mill that Moscow agreed to build in West Pakistan last year.

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21. The Soviets do believe, however, that the crisis will only be stabilized when the East Pakistans are granted a substantial measure of autonomy. They have made clear their preference that this be accomplished under moderate Awami League leadership. Gromyko's apparently successful effort to prevent Indian recognition of Bangla Desh suggests, however, that Moscow still hopes that a satisfactory resolution of the problem can be achieved with Yahya. Moscow shares India's fears that over the longer run pro-Chinese extremists might come to the fore in the East Bengali separatist movement and set up an independent state under Chinese tutelage.

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